



Gene E. Vincent
President
Carroll

Rosie Hussey
Vice President
Clear Lake

Charles C. Edwards, Jr.
Des Moines

Sister Jude Fitzpatrick
West Des Moines

Brian Gentry
Des Moines

Wayne Kobberdahl
Council Bluffs

Mary Jean Montgomery
Spencer

Max Phillips
Woodward

Kameron Dodge
Student Member
Cambridge

Judy A. Jeffrey
Director and
Executive Officer

NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release
December 13, 2007

For More Information:
Elaine Watkins-Miller, 515-281-5651
elaine.watkins-miller@iowa.gov

Iowa School Districts Help Reduce Achievement Gap

Lt. Governor, State Board of Education honor five Iowa school districts with Breaking Barriers award

DES MOINES, Iowa – Five school districts were honored by Lt. Governor Patty Judge and the State Board of Education today for improving gaps in student achievement.

Charles City, Dubuque, Knoxville, Southeast Polk and Waterloo community school districts each received a *Breaking Barriers to Learning and Teaching Award*, which was created by the State Board of Education to recognize successful efforts to eliminate achievement gaps by improving instruction, curriculum and programs, and professional development opportunities for school staff.

“Removing the achievement gap in Iowa remains a priority for the State Board,” said State Board President Gene Vincent. “We have seen progress toward this goal statewide, and it is important that we recognize the individual school districts that have committed time, staff and resources toward this effort.”

Districts earned the award if they made significant improvement among any subgroup of students in at least one grade level and subject, without allowing any other subgroup of students to decline significantly.

Highlights of the *Breaking Barriers to Learning and Teaching Awards*:

The Charles City Community School District improved math and reading achievements among low-income students. The elementary teachers worked on linking meaningful developmentally appropriate assignments to standards/benchmarks and developing assessments for each, as well as researching and implementing a variety of reading strategies. Last year, all middle school and the high school teachers became reading teachers through the implementation of reading strategies they were first introduced to at the High School Summit. For additional information, contact Charles City Community School District School Improvement Coordinator Doug Bengtson at dbengts@charlescityschools.org.

The Dubuque Community School District improved math and reading achievements among African-American and special education students. This was accomplished by clarifying grade and course level expectations; aligning assignments and assessments grade and course level expectations; investing in staff development; and aligning time, money and resources to professional development initiatives, such as the Iowa Teaching Academies. The district also reviewed "Profile of a Forward Moving District" and conducted a gap analysis to establish long- and short-term goals for school improvement based on this document. They also established building leadership teams responsible for analysis of implementation and achievement data. For additional information, contact Dubuque Community School District Associate Superintendent Lynne Devaney at ldevaney@dubuque.k12.ia.us.

The Knoxville Community School District improved math and reading achievements among low-income students. This was accomplished by the district and building level professional development focusing on student achievement data and using that data to assess student achievement and plan instruction. Appropriate interventions were developed because teachers knew how to use data to plan instruction. Through professional development experiences at the district and building level, teachers and principals had the opportunity to work together to match instructional methods with the needs of students. For additional information, contact Knoxville Community School District Superintendent Randy Flack at flackran@knoxville.k12.ia.us.

The Southeast Polk Community School District improved math and reading achievements among low-income and special education students. This was accomplished by establishing targets to meet the needs of struggling learners. The district established a clear vision for all district educators, setting high expectations for teaching and learning with an extensive professional development support system in place. The district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan goals are targeted to the use of problem-based mathematics instruction, balanced literacy instruction, and differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of learners. For additional information, contact Southeast Polk Community School District Director of Curriculum/Instruction Kristine Condon at condonk@se-polk.k12.ia.us.

The Waterloo Community School District improved math and reading achievements among African-American, Hispanic, low-income, special education and English Language Learners (ELL) students. The district accomplished this by using the Data Driven Decision Making (DDDM) process in identifying current status and developing strategies to reach their desired goals. They have developed an Equity Matrix, a tool for gathering data on racial achievement gaps and identifying those which are moderately and significantly discrepant from the non-minority group. The district uses the DDDM process district

wide to thoroughly analyze the data, identify strengths and areas to strengthen, set goals and identify strategies and programs to meet those needs. The district's goal is for teachers to utilize various instructional strategies to engage and motivate each learner while stimulating higher order thinking skills. For additional information, contact Waterloo Community School District School & Community Relations Director Sharon Miller at millers@waterloo.k12.ia.us.

###

The State Board of Education and the Iowa Department of Education provide oversight, supervision, and support for the state education system that includes all public elementary and secondary schools, nonpublic schools that receive state accreditation, area education agencies, community colleges, and teacher preparation programs. The State Board of Education consists of ten members: nine voting members who are appointed by the governor for six-year terms and subject to Senate confirmation; and one nonvoting student member who serves a one-year term, also appointed by the governor.